

AS4WX (PRISONERS)

(S50) NIGHT LEAD CUBAN PRISONERS

BY JOHN M. HIGHTOWER

WASHINGTON, OCT. 9 (AP)—INTERESTED U.S. GOVERNMENT AGENCIES MAINTAINED, ON THE WHOLE, A TIGHT BUT BENEVOLENT SILENCE TODAY ABOUT THE PRIVATELY CONDUCTED NEGOTIATIONS FOR RELEASE OF 1,113 PRISONERS CAPTURED IN LAST YEAR'S CUBAN INVASION ATTEMPT.

THE GOVERNMENT'S ROLE, IF ANY, WAS A MYSTERY. BUT OFFICIALS OBVIOUSLY ARE INFORMED OF THE PROGRESS OF THE NEGOTIATIONS BETWEEN PRIME MINISTER FIDEL CASTRO AND NEGOTIATOR JAMES B. DONOVAN, A NEW YORK ATTORNEY.

DONOVAN WAS REPORTED TO HAVE SAID IN A TELEPHONE CONVERSATION TO NEW YORK:

"I'M LOOKING FORWARD TO AN EARLY RESOLUTION OF THE PROBLEM AND I HOPE TO HAVE SOMETHING TO SAY LATER TODAY OR TOMORROW. I AM HIGHLY OPTIMISTIC."

THE REPORT FROM DONOVAN WAS RELAYED BY ROBERT A. MORSE, ASSISTANT GENERAL COUNSEL FOR THE CUBAN FAMILIES COMMITTEE FOR THE LIBERATION OF PRISONERS OF WAR. DONOVAN REPRESENTS THE COMMITTEE IN NEGOTIATIONS WITH CASTRO'S GOVERNMENT.

THE ONLY WORD AVAILABLE IN OFFICIAL QUARTERS HERE CAME FROM STATE DEPARTMENT PRESS OFFICER LINCOLN WHITE. RESPONDING TO QUESTIONS ASKED AT A NEWS CONFERENCE SHORTLY AFTER NOON, HE SAID:

"IT IS MY UNDERSTANDING THAT NO AGREEMENT HAS BEEN REACHED AS OF THIS MORNING. IT IS ALSO MY UNDERSTANDING THAT NEGOTIATIONS ARE CONTINUING."

IN THE PAST THE WHITE HOUSE HAS LOOKED WITH FULL FAVOR ON EFFORTS TO OBTAIN RELEASE OF THE MEN TAKEN PRISONER BY CASTRO'S FORCES WHEN THE BAY OF PIGS INVASION PLAN COLLAPSED IN APRIL 1961. THERE WAS EVERY REASON TO SUPPOSE THAT PRESIDENT KENNEDY AND OTHER U.S. OFFICIALS

THE BAY OF PIGS INVASION PLAN COLLAPSED IN APRIL 1961. THERE WAS EVERY REASON TO SUPPOSE THAT PRESIDENT KENNEDY AND OTHER U.S. OFFICIALS ARE HOPEFUL THAT THE LATEST NEGOTIATIONS WOULD BE SUCCESSFUL SO THE PRISONERS CAN BE RELEASED QUICKLY AND ALLOWED TO COME TO THE UNITED STATES.

THE WELFARE DEPARTMENT HAS WORKED OVERTIME THE LAST FEW DAYS GETTING READY TO HANDLE THE HEALTH PROBLEMS OF THE MEN WHO ARE EXPECTED, UPON RECEIVING THEIR FREEDOM, TO BE FLOWN IMMEDIATELY TO MIAMI, FLA.

AS5WX

THERE WERE REPORTS, NOT DISPUTED HERE, THAT PAN AMERICAN WORLD AIRWAYS, THE ONLY U.S. CARRIER OPERATING TO CUBA, HAD A SMALL FLEET OF PLANES STANDING BY FOR A QUICK AIRLIFT OPERATION TO START UPON SIGNAL FROM DONOVAN.

THE DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE, WHICH HAS CHARGE OF IMMIGRATION PROCEDURES, WAS BELIEVED READY TO HANDLE THE PROCESSING OF THE MEN INTO THE UNITED STATES WITH A MINIMUM OF LEGAL FORMALITIES.

ALL THESE ARRANGEMENTS, HOWEVER, ARE DESIGNED TO PROVIDE FOR THE PRISONERS ONCE THE DEAL GOES THROUGH. INFORMATION ABOUT THEM SHEDS NO LIGHT ON OTHER QUESTIONS MORE DIRECTLY RELATED TO THE NEGOTIATIONS THEMSELVES.

GOVERNMENT SPOKESMEN HERE HAVE TAKEN THE POSITION THAT SINCE DONOVAN'S COMMITTEE IS THE AGENCY PRINCIPALLY INVOLVED THE NEGOTIATIONS ARE PRIVATE AND BEYOND THE RANGE OF OFFICIAL COMMENT OR DISCLOSURE.

ONE OF THE QUESTIONS MOST FREQUENTLY RAISED WITH AUTHORITIES HERE IS--HOW ARE THE FUNDS FOR THE COMMITTEE'S PART OF THE EXCHANGE BEING PROVIDED?

REPORTS FROM HAVANA AND MIAMI HAVE PUT CASTRO'S PRICE FOR FREEDOM FOR THE 1,113 INVASION VETERANS AT AROUND \$60 MILLION WORTH OF FOOD AND MEDICINE. THAT IS A CONSIDERABLE SUM TO RAISE BY PRIVATE SUBSCRIPTION.

THERE HAS BEEN NO COMMENT TO INDICATE WHETHER ANY U.S. GOVERNMENT AGENCY WAS A CONTRIBUTOR. AMONG THE GOVERNMENT AGENCIES ~~THE CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY~~ WHICH HAD MUCH TO DO WITH THE INVASION OPERATION LAST YEAR, HAS SUBSTANTIAL FINANCIAL RESOURCES WHICH ARE NEVER PUBLICLY DISCLOSED. THE WHITE HOUSE HAS AN EMERGENCY FUND FOR USE IN THE NATIONAL INTEREST BY PRESIDENTIAL DECISION.

ANOTHER PUBLICLY UNANSWERED QUESTION RELATES TO DONOVAN'S AUTHORITY. HE COULD NOT HAVE ENGAGED IN THE NEGOTIATIONS WITHOUT CONFIDENCE THAT ANY COMMITMENTS HE MADE WOULD BE FULFILLED IF THE CUBAN SIDE OF THE BARGAIN WAS AGREED AND KEPT.

AS6WX

THE U.S. EMBARGO ON ALL TRADE WITH CUBA MAKES AN EXCEPTION OF FOOD AND MEDICINE. AS FAR AS FOREIGN POLICY GOES THERE APPEARED TO BE NO REASON WHY SUCH DELIVERIES COULD NOT BE MADE.

BUT OBVIOUSLY SPECIAL ARRANGEMENTS, PRESUMABLY REQUIRING GOVERNMENT COOPERATION, WOULD BE NECESSARY TO MAKE SUPPLIES OF FOOD STUFFS AND MEDICINE AVAILABLE QUICKLY.

QUESTIONS HAVE ALSO BEEN RAISED ABOUT HOW THE RANSOM SUPPLIES COULD BE DELIVERED TO CUBA. U.S. FLAG SHIPS HAVE NOT ENGAGED IN CUBAN TRADE FOR MORE THAN A YEAR.

UNDER A RECENT POLICY DECISION, WHICH IS STILL BEING WORKED OUT IN DETAIL, THE UNITED STATES WOULD IMPOSE PENALTIES WHEREVER POSSIBLE ON ANY SHIPS WHICH CARRIED CARGOES TO CUBA.

HOWEVER, ALMOST ANY POLICY PROVIDES FOR EXCEPTIONS IN SPECIAL CASES. KENNEDY MIGHT READILY DECIDE THAT RELEASE OF THE PRISONERS REQUIRED EXTRAORDINARY ACTION.

CZ453PED